

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

An EWP Success Story

Two ice storms during a two-week period in December of 2000 resulted in the most expensive natural disaster in the history of the state of Arkansas.

Tree tops and branches knocked down by the ice created fuel loads on the ground over large parts of southern Arkansas that were five to twenty times the normal load.

Higher fuel loads mean significantly higher risks of wildfire and much greater difficulty in controlling fires that might start.

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Clark County, Arkansas

Every year the Arkansas Forestry Commission responds to a wildfire problem area in Clark County. This area lies along a railroad track in the southern portion of the county west of Gurdon. By the early summer of 2001, 15 responses were made to this area. The first fire occurred just days after the Ross Foundation established a firebreak along the railroad tracks. This fire was contained because of the firebreak. Without the firebreak in place, the potential size for a wildfire could have been more than 200 acres in this one location. As well as saving more than 200 acres of timber worth \$800,000 this area is home to two red cockaded woodpecker colonies. The bird is a Federally protected endangered species.



December 2000 Ice Storm Damage.

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program project was administered locally.

The joint efforts of the Clark County Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Arkansas Forestry Commission, provided landusers in Arkansas with technical and financial assistance to establish or refurbish the firebreaks that were damaged by the ice storms in December 2000.

More than 800 miles of firebreaks were established on private lands under the EWP program.

These firebreaks protect more than 30,000 acres of timber as well as wildlife, homes, and lives.



Firebreaks cleared of debris from the ice storm. Note the deer in the background on the lower photo.

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